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Introduction

David Shikiar

We are happy to have been given the opportunity to publish the essays which were presented at the Fall 1999 Junior Fellows Conference at the IWM. The majority of the participants decided to title the volume ‘Thinking Fundamentals.’ The title is appropriate as a unifying concept because it succinctly expresses the significance of the various essays here collected. Each of the contributing scholars is just beginning his or her respective academic career and accordingly the essays may be read as so many *fundamenta*: foundations for continuing research and thinking. The architectural metaphor also brings out the following feature: The inherent fragility of all foundations. It is always possible to abandon one’s old fundament and begin anew or else to build a new structure on top of an old base. Thinking, few today will disagree, proceeds in very much this way. Nonetheless, granting its revisable and tentative character, thinking must take its first steps with care, for it is these which determine how the rest will follow. Consequently, the idea of a fundament also expresses the idea of solidity and the strength to bear great weight. For this reason a fundament, if it is to serve its purpose well, must reach deep. A fundament which merely remains at or near the surface deserves the name of a ‘botched job.’ By the same token, a fundament which is completely buried out of sight ceases to perform its function; some portion must of necessity extend to a commonly accessible point located in a world shared by both the architect and those who do not fathom her art. A third feature of the metaphor recommends itself: Theoretical thinking is car-

ried out on the basis of a well-laid foundation, but itself begins before the laying of the foundation. Theory is continuous with and emerges from human life. Let me state, with some embarrassment for the necessity of it, a painfully obvious truth: There is no thinker of whom we are aware who is or was not a human being. By the same token let us not reject the idea of the partial transcendence of humanity or at least, as Henry James has expressed it, the occasional lucky one who is permitted to stand ‘under the descent of the god.’ Otherwise put, thinking also disrupts and is discontinuous with everyday human life; it is a disruption which causes those so affected to turn their gazes upward (and perhaps, to continue with our metaphor, simultaneously downward as well). If one smiles at the mention of ‘the god’ in an introduction to a collection of academic essays, one may well be reminded that genuine thinking is necessarily poetical in addition to be logically precise. We concede that the poets possess the strongest claim to having rivalled or at times having surpassed the priests in conveying the divine to man, but we add that the lucid sobriety of science—and I think of the more comprehensive German term *Wissenschaft*—need itself attain to something divine if it is to make good on its claim to enlighten and not merely to ‘fit one out’ with knowledge or, worse, to entertain.

We would like to thank the IWM and the various foundations and educational institutions that financed our research visits.

Some description of the essays is in order. I proceed to that task immediately.

The first five essays are collected under the accurate, if unimaginative heading ‘Philosophy.’

At the risk of exposing myself to the charge of vanity, I must open the collection with my own contribution, if we may speak of an ‘opening’ in connection with an internet publication. The title, ‘How Does Thinking Begin?’, itself demands this position and would reproach any attempt at contradicting the modest claim, conveyed in its title, to treat of a theme which is suited for a beginning. In the essay I develop a framework for understanding the possibility of the beginning of all thinking, inclusive of philosophical thinking. I analyze amazement, the theoretical question, the structure of a thing and ‘human being’s’ relation to the Whole and the things which are encountered in it. Some attention is given to the political problem that the philosopher confronts as a consequence of his necessarily living amongst non-philosophers. I outline three possibilities for understanding the relation between thinker and thing, which here may be labelled as Kantian, Heideggerian and Platonic-Hegelian respectively and develop an argument which supports the final conceptual alternative. I close with a point about the relevance and nature of classical metaphysics and offer a recommendation for reconciling the project of con-

structuring a synoptic vision with the claim that finitude is an essential feature of the 'human.'

In the second essay, 'Primordial Freedom: The Authentic Truth of *Dasein* in Heidegger's *Being and Time*', Craig Nichols engages the traditional philosophical problem of freedom while offering a novel interpretation of Heidegger's argument in *Sein und Zeit*. He argues that Heidegger's play on the term *Entschlossenheit*, resoluteness, in Heidegger's masterwork of 1927, shows that the early 'pre-turn' Heidegger was pursuing a novel conception of freedom vis-à-vis German Idealism and the Western metaphysical tradition as a whole. He clarifies the structure of *Dasein* as *Sorge* and Heidegger's conception of truth, while also providing analyses of temporality and meaning. He explains how Heidegger's thought attempts to articulate a revelation of sense which underlies and makes possible the meanings of everyday life and scientific discourse and closes with an account of Heidegger's interpretation of freedom as possible only in its connection with historicity.

The third essay is entitled 'The Concept of *Poiesis* in Heidegger's *An Introduction to Metaphysics*.' Here Alexander Di Pippo examines and reconstructs the transformation Heidegger's interpretation of *poiesis* underwent over the period spanning from the publication of *Sein und Zeit* to the Thirties when Heidegger had made his self-described '*Kehre*.' While at first Heidegger understood all Greek philosophers as being united by a common manner of conceiving nature and being in accordance with the paradigm of production, he later comes to distinguish the pre-Socratics from Plato and Aristotle after being led, through tensions inherent in his philosophical program, to a reconsideration of the concept of nature. Succinctly, while Plato and Aristotle interpret nature on the model of human production, for the pre-Socratics the reverse may be said to be the case: Human production is a region of the productive activity of nature. Consequently, poetry and philosophy were closely united for the pre-Socratic poets and thinkers in a way which they were not for Plato and Aristotle.

Vladislav Suvák's essay, 'The Essence of Truth in the Western Tradition in the Thought of Heidegger and Patocka', is the fourth in this collection. Prof. Suvák provides an analysis of the concept of truth in Heidegger and Patocka which wards off many misunderstandings of Heidegger and provides a summary of the development of the latter's thought on the concept, arguing along the way that truth is the unifying and central theme of Heidegger's thinking as a whole. He claims that this interpretation does not displace the centrality of the ontological difference between Being and beings, but that it clarifies it. Prof. Suvák also argues that the Czech philosopher Patocka has enriched our understanding of truth by connecting it, via an interpretation of the life of Socrates, with action. Emphasis is placed upon

Socrates having been a philosopher and a great questioner, not a moralist. Patocka's re-evaluation and extension of Heidegger's interpretation provides a corrective to the latter's reduction of *praxis* to a secondary status in relation to attending to the presencing-absencing process of Being. Otherwise put, *both* uncoveredness and *praxis* belong to the essence of truth.

In Paul Bruno's contribution, 'The Artist and the Self', the author sets up a conceptual and historical framework for thinking about the inter-connection between the modern concepts of genius and the self. Dr. Bruno begins with an analysis of Kant's concept of nature and the development it underwent in the change from the first to the third *Kritik*. Judgment, as linked with purposiveness and art, is for Kant the faculty which mediates between understanding and reason, hence nature and freedom; consequently, the artisan becomes a mediator between the two. Further, Kant, following the lead of Descartes, establishes the imagination as that faculty which places a subject 'in touch with' objects; in the case of Kant this takes the form of object-constitution. The amplified role of the imagination is later transformed into a creative one. This model of creativity becomes the central moment in the modern idea of the self. The self *is* the self which has created itself. He closes with reflections on the celebrity role of the contemporary artist, a function which has in some cases come to overshadow the art itself, and on the concept of the artist as critic.

The remaining essays have been collected together under the heading 'Politics and Culture.'

The sixth essay is Eimear Wynne's 'Reflections on Recognition: A Matter of Self-Realization or a Matter of Justice?'. She examines the concept of recognition in an attempt to define its role in relation to politics. She proceeds by way of an analysis of Hegel's master-slave dialectic and proceeds to take into consideration the theories of Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser. The concept of inter-subjectivity is developed throughout the analysis. Her discussion of Honneth highlights a difficulty with his concept of 'self-esteem' when understood in relation to a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic society, while her treatment of Fraser develops the criticism that recognition cannot be restricted to a formal-procedural framework. Accordingly, she argues that participatory parity would not suffice to render superfluous the need to be recognized for who one takes oneself to be—or at least not to be *mis*-recognized. Finally, she concludes that lived reciprocity, embodied in different levels of community interaction, is a necessary element of politics.

Jason Kosnoski, in '*Is John Dewey a Communitarian?*', offers a new interpretation of John Dewey which attempts to outline an alternative between the contemporary poles of liberalism and communitarianism. His analysis takes its bearings by what

Mr. Kosnoski calls Dewey's 'naturalistic phenomenology' of human experience. He describes how Dewey attempts to draw out the political implications of his concept of the 'community of experience' and goes on to set up a framework for developing these political implications further, work which will be completed in his dissertation. His analysis of Dewey places special emphasis on the historicity of the present moment, the connection between action and meaning, the function of creativity in a democratic community, and the aesthetic nature of experience. His ultimate goal is to fashion concrete recommendations for the structuring of a democratic community.

Kamila Stullerová analyzes, from the perspective of cultural-literary studies, the inter-animation of the ideas of political transition and national identity through a consideration and comparison of the work of Vladimír Mináč and Peter Zajac, both Slovak commentators on the post-1989 Slovak political transition. Through her comparison, she demonstrates the plasticity and relatedness of such concepts as nation, history and even democracy as used by ideologically motivated intellectuals. The idea of constructed timelessness is developed at length as is the self-definition of a nation through describing its historical relation to neighboring nations. In this connection, the Slovaks are represented by Mináč as 'weak.' Her examination of Peter Zajac also describes the intellectual counter-reaction which seeks to reduce to its minimum the mythological concept of nation in favor of concept of the civic founded squarely on the notion of human dignity, an anti-mythologizing which derives momentum from the contemporary development of 'global' culture.

James Boettcher, a philosopher by training, has contributed the ninth essay of this collection, 'Rawls and Gaus on the Idea of Public Reason.' In his essay he examines John Rawls' concept of Public Reason in light of criticisms directed against it by Gerald Gaus. He defends Rawls against a number of Gaus' charges, vindicating both the role of sincerity in connection with arguing in public from premises which one takes to be false and the notion of consensus as a legitimate regulative ideal for democratic deliberative processes. He agrees with and develops one of Gaus' criticisms, namely that Rawls will face grave difficulties in his attempt to insulate a domain of strictly political reasoning from a wider territory encompassing a broader concept of epistemic justification.

Pavlo Kutuev's paper, 'Development of Underdevelopment: State and Modernization Project in the post-Leninist Ukraine', is the tenth in this collection. Prof. Kutuev carries out an examination of the post-Leninist Ukraine from the perspective of modernization theory, Andre Gunder Frank's concept of the development of under-development, and Weberian historical-comparative political sociology. He applies Weber's concept of the patrimonial state and patrimonial political structures

to the societal transformation in the post-Leninist Ukraine. He also offers a critical assessment of background assumptions of contemporary theorizing on post-Leninist regimes, while rejecting the premises of 'transitology.' The essay claims that instead of undertaking the modernization project, Ukrainian post-Leninist society development has fallen into societal decay.

In the last paper of this collection, Andrej Skolkay examines the concept and origin of populism, especially in Central Eastern Europe, and Slovakia in particular. He contends that Slovakia presents an ideal case for evidence that the argument about 'populist political culture' as a source of populism can and should be refused. His paper attempts to invalidate some older as well as more recent theories concerning the rise of populism in Slovakia. While there are many sufficient causes leading to populism, he argues that only three are necessary: socio-economic, political, and cultural. These lead to the crisis of the regime or the state of which either the political elites are unaware or for which they are unable or unwilling to find a solution. This situation can have various consequences which largely depends on the availability of a skilful 'charismatic' leader and the action, or inaction, of political elites.